▼ ▼ ▼ Chapter 1

Passage

Who am I? That is a question that all of us ask at some point in our lives. The answer comes from many places. It comes from family, place of birth, religious beliefs, the nation in which we live, the state we call home, our community, our school, and the history of our ancestors. That history includes the way our ancestors lived, the stories they told, the food they ate, how they worked, their loves and fears, and their hopes and dreams. Some of those dreams include you.

This book will try to help you answer the question of who you are by looking at the history of your cultural ancestors. If you claim South Carolina as home, your cultural ancestors include not just those who are related through blood lines. Cultural ancestors include all those who once shared the state you now call home. All of them helped define and create what South Carolina is today.

In particular, this book will focus on your cultural ancestors who came from Africa. For some of you these are also ancestors by blood. For others there may be no blood ties. But, as you will learn in this book, there are many cultural ties. This first chapter has two major purposes. First, we will examine African roots and the meaning of the idea of homeland. To do this we must go back to Africa itself and look at the cultures from which thousands of your ancestors were stolen. Second, we will look at the people who came and the story of their coming. It is not a very happy story, but it is an important story. It reveals the strength and endurance of a people under the worst of conditions.

Before we do any of that, let us take a glimpse at what life may have been like in a West African village in the 1500s. This short fictional story centers on a young man who was just about your age.

A Day in the Life of Baroka

Baroka awoke with a start. That pesky mosquito again, he thought. Suddenly, he raised his hand near his ear. Whop! He slapped at the mosquito. "Now, Mosquito" Baroka said with a grin, "you know that the people and the animals are still angry with you." Baroka was recalling a story an elder had told him a few days before. The story was about why the mosquito buzzed in people's ears. Mosquito had annoyed Iguana.

Iguana had then frightened the other animals and caused great alarm and confusion. When King Lion sought the source of all the confusion, Mosquito hid. So even now, Mosquito buzzed around people's ears trying tofind out if King Lion was still angry. A resounding "whop" was his usual answer.

Now there was no more time for insect pests. Baroka remembered that traders were coming to the village today. He hoped there would be a feast and perhaps another story from the elders. Quickly he splashed water from the storage jars on his face and arms and went to milk the family goats. By the time he finished, his mother had prepared a meal of rice cakes and honey.

Baroka ate quickly. He shared the excitement running through the village. The traders were Ashanti and were expected to bring much of their famous finely-woven cloth to trade for rice, or perhaps for the baskets and wood carvings that the Yoruba made so well. Baroka wanted to roam among the traders and listen to the haggling for bargains. He was annoyed when his father insisted he watch little Sidi, who had come to live with them when her own mother

died. But, knowing the importance of family and kinship which the elders taught, Baroka dutifully obeyed.

Baroka's father had decided he would bring a decorated clay water jar and two artfully woven rice baskets to trade for the Ashanti cloth. Just then drum beats and gazelle horns announced the arrival of the Ashanti.

Soon the entire village was humming as traders made bargains and elders intervened to resolve disagreements. Baroka's father traded for an exceptionally fine gold-colored roll of cloth. It would make bright new garments for Baroka's mother and sister.

By early afternoon the trading was done and feasting had begun. Baroka stuffed himself on rice cakes, roasted chicken, wild pig, yams, and pumpkin. Afterwards storytelling began. Yoruba and Ashanti competed to see who could tell the best stories. Baroka decided the story he liked best was about why Dog, rather than Jackal, had come to live with people and guard their homes in exchange for a warm place near the fire. He did not care for the tale of how Rabbit had tricked the other animals, stolen all their grain, put gravel in their storage huts, and fixed the blame on poor, innocent Squirrel. Squirrel's suffering and Rabbit's escape seemed unfair. However, Baroka thought, no doubt Rabbit would not fare as well in some future tale of the elders.

After the storytelling, Baroka had to do his regular chore of herding the goats into their pen for the evening. This done, he was quite willing to listen quietly as his mother sang and prepared the hut for sleeping. Baroka's day had been long and exciting. He was tired. Even the whispers of the adults could not stir his curiosity on this night. Had he not been so tired, perhaps he would have puzzled over their hushed voices. The adults were speaking softly of what the Ashanti had said about light-tone people, who had arrived off the coast lately. They had come in great canoes carried by the wind according to the Ashanti. Had Baroka heard this, he might have wondered what their arrival foretold.

[Story by W. Calvin Smith, based on an old African tale entitled "Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears." Versions of this story appear in many sources. You can read another, longer version of this story in a young children's book of the same title by Verna Aardema, N.Y.: Dial Press, 1975.]

African Roots

A few years ago an African-American writer named Alex Haley wrote a book titled *Roots.* Haley's book met with great success because it tapped feelings that had been neglected for a long time. Later the book was turned into a mini-series for television. Millions watched the series. Many African-Americans had never been given the chance to learn about their personal roots or had been taught they had no roots. They felt a new sense of pride. Some were learning about their homeland and blood ancestors for the first time. Whites who watched found new understanding and respect. Set in West Africa, *Roots* shows the homeland area of most of the Africans who were brought in chains to America through South Carolina.

Feelings about homeland were different for African-Americans than for most other groups. Being enslaved, forced to come, and treated as inferior once they arrived all had a great impact. An inner sense of pride came into conflict with the New World culture. That culture tried to force African-Americans to view themselves and their background as inferior. The New World culture gave them a new religion. It gave them new names, new clothing styles, and a new language. What Americans from Europe did not realize at the time was that African culture was changing the New World culture. African culture gave new styles of religion, new words, and new modes of behavior. But that comes later in the story.

For generations of African-Americans, the result was strongly mixed feelings about their homeland. They thought that something they loved had been removed from them. That left them feeling sad. They felt a sense of longing and loss. Yet they were told that the European based New World culture was better. Some parts of the new culture they did cherish. Most did become Christian and were sincerely thankful for these new beliefs.

The term for strongly mixed feelings is "ambivalent." We can see these ambivalent feelings in African-American writings as early as the poetry of Phillis Wheatley, an enslaved African, in the 1770s. On the one hand, she laments that she was forced from the roots of her homeland.

> I, young in life, by seeming cruel fate was
> snatch'd from Afric's fancy'd happy seat. . .

On the other hand, she expresses thankfulness that this "snatching" brought her Christian religion.

> Twas mercy brought me from my Pagan
> land,
> Taught my benighted soul to understand
> That there's a God, and there's a Saviour
> too . . .

We can also see how long these ambivalent feelings lasted. In the 1920s another African-American poet, Countee Cullen, expressed similar feelings. In his poem "Heritage," he asks the question of what Africa should mean to him. On the one hand he answers that Africa could be wonderful things from times long passed. On the other hand, he wonders if he should care at all, because we all must live in the present. In a sense this is the central question of this book. What does Africa mean to you? What does Africa mean to South Carolina?

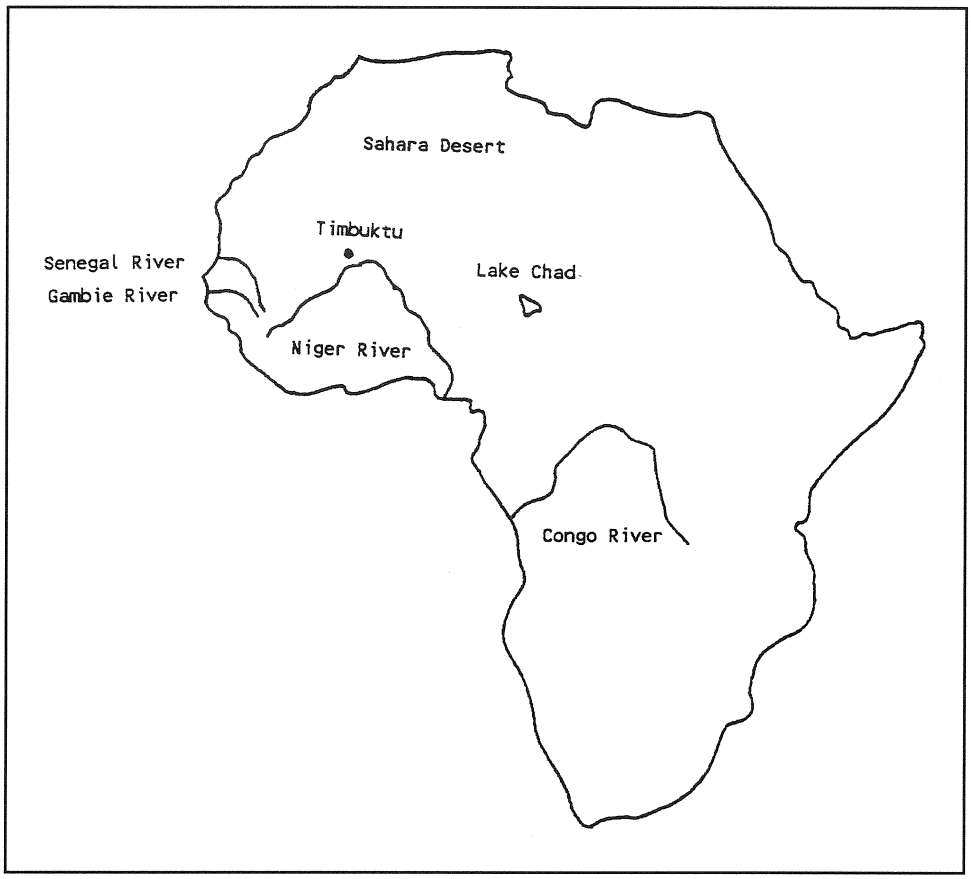
By the end of the First World War, however, attitudes did begin to change. The change was led by African-American scholars. The most important of these scholars was W.E.B. DuBois. Dr. DuBois was one of the truly great minds in all of the 1900s. He was a man of action as well as words. He was one of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the most well known civil rights group in the nation. DuBois helped foster a change in attitude that would eventually bear fruit in a new homeland pride. He was one of the first to describe the great medieval kingdoms of West Africa. His research taught us about the complex and sophisticated cultures below the Sahara Desert in central and southern Africa. He and other scholars began teaching us that roots of the homeland were not lost. Africa had survived the difficult passage to America. It had contributed to the lifestyle and values of African-Americans despite their ill treatment. More recent scholars have confirmed his early work. Alex Haley brought these truths to the rest of us in popular literature and television.

Let us now turn to those African roots. We need to look at two areas of Africa. The majority of Africans who were enslaved in South Carolina came from West Africa. The second largest group, roughly forty percent of those who were brought to the state after 1730, came from the central southern Atlantic coast of Africa. This is where the nations of Congo and Angola are today, the area around the mouth of the Congo River. What were these areas like in terms of geography and past history? Let us begin with West Africa.

Geographically, West Africa is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean in the West and South. The Sahara Desert defines its northern boundary. Lake Chad and what is presently Nigeria are at its eastern boundary. Its climate ranges from very dry desert to very wet rain forest. Several rivers give it access to the Atlantic coast. They include the Gambia, the Senegal, and the Niger. The region is sometimes called "Senegambia" because of the importance of the first two of these rivers.

Historical kingdoms arose in West Africa largely because of early connections with the Saharan trade routes. The routes ran from West Africa northward to the Mediterranean coast. Those routes date back to the ancient world. Gold and kola nuts from West Africa were exchanged for a variety of goods from North Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. These included dried fruit, salt, tools, copper, and cloth. From the 300s to the 1700s, or fourth to the eighteenth century, empires and kingdoms rose in succession here. They were built around the cities that controlled the trade routes.

The earliest empire was named Ghana. It dates back to the fourth century, more than 1,600 years ago. Ghana was also the name taken by the first of the modern, post-colonial states in Africa in this region. Ancient Ghana reached the height of its power in the eleventh century. For several hundred years it



Africa, showing key rivers and landmarks that define the areas from which Africans were taken to be enslaved in South Carolina.

dominated the Saharan trade routes. When you consider that the United States celebrated its own 200th birthday in 1976, this is a long time.

After repeated attacks by Moslems from the north, Ghana finally lost power to the empire of Mali in the 1200s, or the thirteenth century. Mali was founded by the Mandingo people. They founded the original state in the twelfth century. Within 100 years it was a great kingdom. It covered what today is most of Gambia, Guinea, Senegal, Mali, and Mauritania. Mali's rulers were Muslim converts. They made lavish pilgrimages to Mecca in keeping with their Islamic faith. In 1324, Mansa Mussa, the king of Mali, made such a pilgrimage. He took nearly 60,000 people with him as well as many gifts. There were thousands of guards, 500 servants, each carrying a staff made of gold, and eighty camels carrying about 24,000 pounds of gold. It must have been quite a trip.

Mali survived until the 1500s. It fell to a rival kingdom, Songhai, which had built its power base at Timbuktu on the Niger River. Songhai was even larger than Mali, stretching from the Atlantic coast westward to what today is central Nigeria. Songhai, too, was a Muslim state. It used the laws of the Koran, the Muslim holy book, for its system of justice. In the 1400s, the city of Timbuktu in Songhai was home of one of the world's great universities.

Internal strife and outside pressures eventually splintered Songhai into smaller kingdoms. No major empire replaced it before the time when Africans were enslaved and taken to the New World. Instead, a number of small kingdoms emerged. These included Dahomey, Ashanti, and Mossi. Their rivalry and intermittent warfare probably helped European traders when they began to arrive in the 1500s and 1600s. Captured enemies could be sold for a profit. Many of them were enslaved as cheap labor for the New World.

The second largest group of enslaved Africans came from the area around the mouth of the Congo River. This area and these people shared some similarities but also had some differences with those from West Africa. The climate was similar to that of West Africa. Both were tropical. Both areas were rich in fishing because of the rivers and the ocean. Both grew rice. This was important to whites who needed labor skilled in rice growing. Both areas also shared

a common heritage. Both were settled by many of the same people who had been moving south on the African continent seeking new areas to grow food. They all spoke different dialects or variations of the Bantu language.

Because the area around the mouth of the Congo River was settled much later, the civilizations of the area were not as old as those of West Africa. The kingdom of Kongo was created at the mouth of the river in the 1400s. Kongo had a well-organized government, somewhat like our own in structure. A king ruled a central government. At a lower level, governors ruled state governments or provinces. At the lowest level, districts and villages had their own rulers. This is somewhat like our national-state-county-city structure. The king had no army of his own. He had to depend on the provincial and district rulers to support him. That meant he had to be a skillful politician to hold the nation together. Outside of politics, Kongo also developed a complex culture. The nation developed its own music, sculpture, and poetry.

The Portuguese began a slow invasion of the area in the late 1400s. By the 1600s, they were enslaving people of the nation of Kongo. The king tried to negotiate to end the slave trade. It did not work. The Portuguese invaded in 1665. They defeated the army of Kongo and killed the king. By the early 1700s, invaders splintered the great nation of Kongo into several small states. Portugal and other European nations ran them as colonies.

Cultural Transmissions

The arrival of whites meant that many villages were destroyed. The arrival increased the break up of great African nations. But this break-up and even enslavement did not mean the loss of culture. Africans brought their customs and beliefs with them to the New World. As you will see, people passed these customs and beliefs down through the generations in often quiet and hidden ways. African-Americans modified their culture to fit a new place. In many cases, whites adopted parts of the African culture without knowing where the culture had come from. African culture would mix with the cultures of others who came to the New World and create a new culture. African culture became part of what South Carolina is. The important point of this complex process of transmission, modification, adoption, and mixing is that the culture of Africa endured.

Among the most enduring elements of a culture are its religious beliefs. Islam influenced much of West Africa. Most certainly, enslaved Africans brought some Islamic practices to the New World. These practices came into conflict with European Christianity.

African-Americans using the method of "head-toting" to carry cotton from the fields near Mt. Pleasant in about 1870. Reproduced from Constance B. Schulz, Ed., The History of S.C. Slide Collection, *slide H-1 (Sandlapper Publishing Company, 1989). Courtesy of S.C. Historical Society.*

(Left) Head-toting by male vegetable vendor in the early 1900s. Courtesy Dr. Howard Woody, the S.C. Postcard Archive, South Caroliniana Library, USC. (Right) Head-toting by female vegetable vendors in early 1900s. Courtesy of William Davie Beard.

Christianity tried to eliminate other religious ideas and make converts, even among enslaved people. Even though Christianity won the conflict between religious practices, Christianity was changed. We can see the greatest change in how African-Americans practiced Christianity. However, we can also see that the religious practices of whites changed to include emotional expressions that have African roots.

African beliefs in many gods and reverence toward the spirits of one's ancestors merged with certain religious practices in the New World. Catholic saints were linked with African gods in the practice of Voodoo. The term "Vodun" in Haitian becomes Voodoo in English. Vodun comes from an African Dahomean word meaning "deity," or god.

"Faith healing" through the power of tribal magicians was another aspect of religion. Magicians frequently used herbs and roots in their cures. This practice would be continued by the "root doctors" that emerged in African-American communities in the New World. The use of roots and herbs continues even today. Let us take a look at this tradition.

Before modern times, most people depended on remedies made from plants, animals, or minerals. Records from pre-Civil War South Carolina show that both black and white Americans depended on a wide variety of medicinal plants. Medical care was extremely limited for everyone, but especially for African-Americans. People depended on home remedies. Herb or root doctors provided what medical care there was. Midwives delivered the babies. Often daughters learned these skills from their mothers. Usually a female member of the family was responsible for almost all family medical care. Many of the traditional treatments probably came from Africa, where herbal medicine was widely practiced. Because of a similar climate, people could find many of these same herbs in South Carolina.

In the 1700s and 1800s, people worried about different illnesses than those that concern us today. The first settlers feared fevers. Those caused by malaria, typhoid, or yellow fever were especially bad. Dysentery was another serious disease. Little was known about the causes of such illnesses. In fact, malaria was a problem at St. Helena Island, which is near Beaufort on the coast, well into the 1900s. In

A 1910 photo of "Uncle Sam Polite," who taught students at the Penn Center how to knit fish nets, a skill carried by African-Americans from their native African shores. From the Penn School Collection. Permission granted by Penn Center, Inc., St. Helena Island, S.C. In the Southern Historical Collection of the Manuscripts Department, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. This picture can also be seen in The History of S.C. Slide Collection *(Sandlapper Publishing Company, 1989) as slide H-12.*

1930 Dr. York Bailey, an African-American graduate of the Penn School and Howard University's School of Medicine, managed to get the swamps drained. This eliminated many of the disease-carrying mosquitoes.

African-Americans in the Carolina low country frequently made teas from plants. The teas were used to treat colds, burns, and fevers. During the Civil War the supply of prepared medicines was cut off. People had to depend entirely on their local plants. These would be collected by enslaved African-Americans on the plantations. The designated African-American "nurse" on a plantation was responsible for giving out medicines. Even before the war, nurses of both sexes helped the doctors who were called to the plantations to treat wounds and extract teeth. Some nurses, generally women, received training so that they could care for those who were very ill. Both nurses and midwives were often older women who were no longer able to labor in the fields.

Although now there are few midwives, the tradition lives on. Sometimes it lives in the inspiration it provided to others. Dr. James A. Boykin of Lancaster, an African-American doctor, remembers his midwife grandmother, Mary Jane Witherspoon. She delivered him when he was born. During his childhood she was called out at all hours to deliver babies. She inspired him to become a doctor. The tradition lives in another way as well. Some people are returning to the practice. Nurse-midwives, trained in the ancient practice and also in modern medicine, are being used more and more in comfortable home-like "birthing centers." People find this an attractive alternative to impersonal hospitals.

After the Civil War, African-Americans still had to depend on these "nurses." Most people could not afford to pay white doctors. There were few African-American doctors. Midwives, some of them trained at the Penn Center, were delivering babies well into the 1900s. Many people lived in fairly isolated areas. Some of the healers had quite good reputations. Even today, in some areas people depend on traditional healers to treat many illnesses.

We can see this tradition most clearly in a relatively isolated community like St. Helena Island. Here the people retained many practices from the past. The island had only one local physician well into the 1900s. So people continued to depend on traditional medicine long after the Civil War was over. A researcher living on the island found that people used more than forty different substances as medicines. Various herbs were collected, washed, dried in the sun, and stored in cloth bags. In addition to herbs, other ingredients included onions, garlic, cornstarch, cottonseed oil, and turpentine. At least some of these medicines were beneficial. In fact, a number of those plants are the basis for drugs approved by the U.S. government for more than one hundred years. For example the islanders thought peach tree leaf helped reduce high blood pressure and fever. When a drug for skin problems was unavailable during World War II, the U.S. government substituted a drug made from peach tree leaf. However, Spanish moss, used by

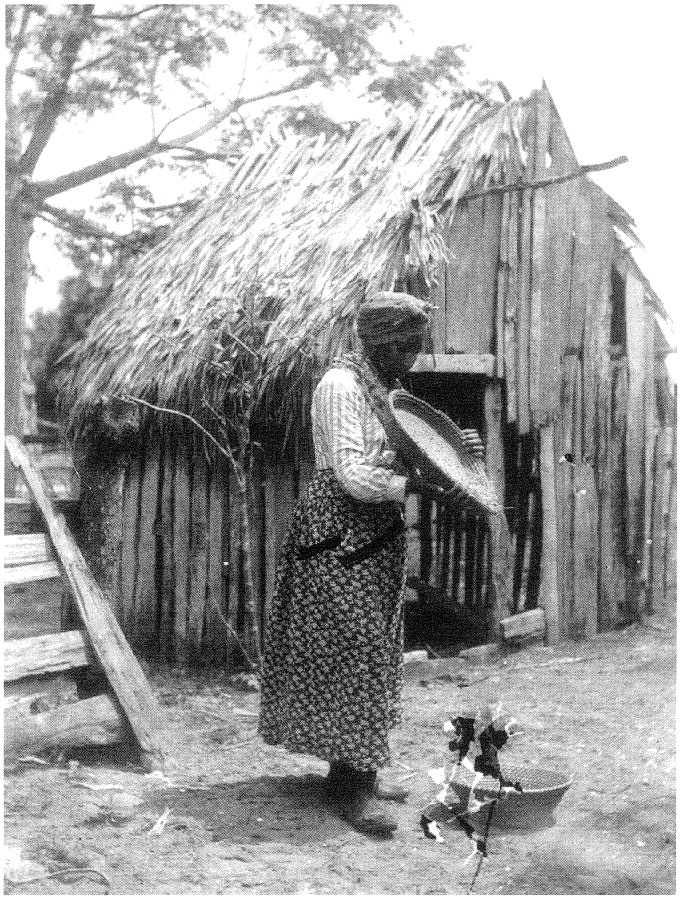
the islanders in their shoes or on their heads to relieve "high blood," does not seem to have found a wider usage!

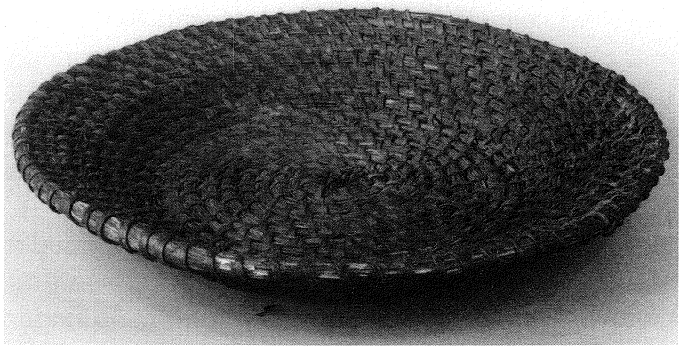
Root doctors often divided illnesses into those of the mind and of the body. They saw good health in terms of keeping the blood properly balanced. The blood could be either too sweet or too bitter, too high or too low. On St. Helena, when the blood was too bitter, the treatment was sweet medicines like carrot seed, sugar, wine, or sassafras. When the blood was too sweet, they used bitter medicines like snake root, horehound, and the root of the coral bean. Blood pressure seemed to be related to the flavor of the blood. High blood pressure went along with blood that was too sweet. Low blood pressure went with bitter blood.

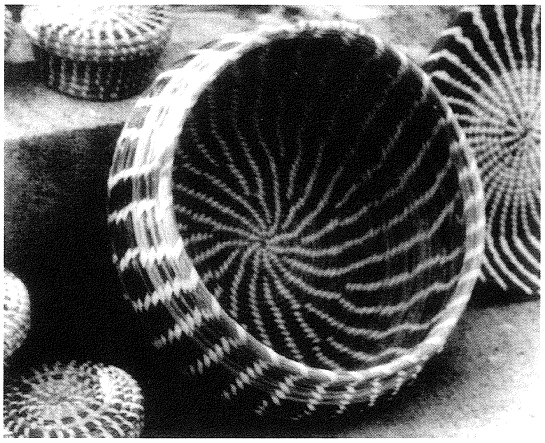
People consulted root doctors when someone was dizzy, or had a headache, or was unable to sleep. Some of the remedies suggested for these and other problems are similar to those of modern physicians. The root doctors might tell people to improve their diet or to get more sleep. Some of the practitioners sounded much like psychologists because they helped with stress related problems.

However, people thought some illnesses were caused by witchcraft. If the person had committed a wrong, the usual remedies would not work. Some special intervention and repentance would be needed. Before the time of enslavement, many people believed in the power of witches. Many African peoples thought

(Top Right) Coil Rush Basket made in the 1800s of sweetgrass and Palmetto leaves. Reproduced with permission of the Charleston Museum. From "Conflict and Transcendence: African-American Art in South Carolina," organized by the Columbia Museum of Art. (Bottom Right) Sweetgrass basket made in Charleston in 1993. Photo by Aimee Smith. (Left) Woman winnowing rice in a farmer basket near Beaufort in 1907. This shows how methods and crafts survived down through time. Note the African-style thatched roof on the building in the background. From the Penn School Collection. Permission granted by Penn Center, Inc. St. Helen Island, S.C. In the Southern Historical Collection of the Manuscripts Department, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. This picture can also be seen in The History of S.C. Slide Collection *(Sandlapper Publishing Company, 1989) as slide D-44.*







that witches caused incurable illness. We can find stories of witchcraft in the accounts of former enslaved African-Americans like Jacob Stroyer and Simon Brown. Mainstream medicine practiced in modern hospitals and clinics would be of no use for such problems.

Today, we are beginning to learn that the mind has the power to help in healing. To this extent, practitioners of witchcraft and voodoo were onto something. The best root doctors added to their knowledge of plants a good "bedside manner." That is, they treated the mind as well as the body by boosting the patient's confidence. Today, medical science recognizes the importance of treating the "whole person." African-American root doctors were doing this long ago. One of them said that God had provided a remedy for all illness. People just had to find the remedy. We are just now "discovering" these ideas in modern medicine.

The family was the basis of social life in Africa, as elsewhere. Even though the slave trade uprooted and separated African families, aspects of African family life reemerged in America. Perhaps the most important aspect of African family life was psychological—the belonging. The sense of belonging went beyond the family as we think of it today. Suppose a young African child lost his mother. He could turn to other "mothers" within a larger family of the clan or tribe or society for love and comfort. In some societies, men had several wives. For a child, these women could take on some of the functions of her own mother.

In the enslaved New World, a similar compensation would occur. Families were often split up because of death or because whites sold members away. Children would be accepted within another family group. They would be treated as any other child in the family. Of course, this did not lessen the pain. It was a means of survival that came from the roots of Africa. After enslavement ended, freed men and women sought long and hard to find missing family members.

African languages affected our language. The Southern style of English uses many English terms and some African terms in a dialect that has musical qualities that partially come from Africa. Few people understand this, some scholars argue that modern whites use language that is closer to its African origin than the language used by many modern African-Americans. For reasons of safety and security, enslaved African-Americans needed to be able to talk to each other in ways whites could not understand. Whites picked up African terms. This forces African-Americans to come up with new language that was further removed from its origin. We will discuss this topic more in a later chapter when we look at Gullah.

Another area that has easily identifiable African roots is the food we eat and how we prepare it. Much of southern cooking is African cooking with new, added ingredients from both the South and Europe. The reasons are quite logical. Enslaved Africans did most of ther cooking on plantations. After the Civil War, African-American household help did a great deal of cooking for whites in their homes. They used methods and spices that had been passed down from generation to generation. We will look at this in a later chapter.

Recent scholars have found African roots in one unusual area—Southern etiquette. Etiquette means the way we behave toward each other and the terms we use in speaking to each other on a day-to-day basis. As you should know, the South is known for its manners and politeness. Whites often think that this is just the heritage of English nobility. That is certainly part of it. But it also has African roots. Great respect for elders has a definite African connection. Much of the spirit of the Southern manners is African, though the formal terms are English. One might say that Southern manners are English manners with emotion. Much of that emotion has African origins.

Much of the art and crafts we find in South Carolina has African roots. These include carving, basketweaving, a wide range of music and dance, and even painting. All of these have cultural origins from Africa. Whites have adopted much of this. In later chapters of the book, we will look at these areas in some detail.

Finally, we see African-Americans returning to African clothing styles as they rediscover their heritage. Kente cloth, which is made of woven strips of cotton, silk, or rayon sewn together, has become very popular in the United States. The Asante people in Ghana wear this type of cloth. People make this cloth in a variety of patterns and colors.

Enslaved Africans were treated harshly on ships that took them to America. Those who died were thrown overboard. Reproduced from Constance B. Schulz, Ed., The History of S.C. Slide Collection, *slide B55 (Sandlapper Publishing Company, 1989). Courtesy of South Caroliniana Library.*

African-Americans use Kente cloth to decorate different kinds of clothes as well as personal items like pocketbooks. Ironically, it is in such high demand that large quantities are now being made by machine in countries in Asia.

Passage to South Carolina

Some of the first Africans who entered North America probably did not come under the harsh conditions of enslavement. Their exact status is uncertain. Some probably came to the New World as explorers. Others came either as servants or as enslaved people in the early 1500s. Africans were with Balboa on the expedition that discovered the Pacific, with Cortes in Mexico, and Coronado in the West. The Spanish explorer Ayllon brought enslaved Africans to the South Carolina coast in 1525. The precise location is uncertain. It was once thought to be in the Port Royal area. Later evidence is that the area was farther north, closer to where Georgetown is today. Other archaeological evidence shows that it may have been south on the Savannah River. There is even some evidence that those who were enslaved revolted against the Spanish. Some who escaped may have intermarried with the Indians of the area. Except for those who escaped, none remained there very long.

The Spanish had already established enslavement by the time the English began their permanent New World colonies. Colonial Virginia is where the horrible institution of enslavement began to evolve among the English. Most historians agree that the Africans of 1619 were not enslaved. They probably had the status of indentured servants. Indentured servitude was the form of non-free labor most often used by the English.

Over a period of fifty years or more, the Africans in Virginia gradually lost even this lowly status. They moved from temporary servitude to servitude for life-slavery. According to some sources, racial prejudice may have cause this to happen. Enslaving people of a different race is easier than enslaving those of your own race. You can rationalize that they are different. You can even fool yourself into thinking that enslavement is good for them because they are different in ways that make them inferior. This thinking is prejudiced and bigoted. These wrong ideas allowed

those who did the enslaving to live with their consciences, so long as they did not think too much about what they had done.

A more current theory adds another element. There is evidence that some Africans did have small farms in coastal areas after completing their time as servants. But these farms did not last long. The people either moved away or were enslaved. Virginia tobacco growers needed a lot of cheap labor to clear more land for tobacco. Freeing servants who had worked for the agreed time made labor more expensive. So the white planters found ways to keep Africans as servants for life. This was simple greed.

In truth, both prejudice and greed probably played important parts in creating enslavement in the early colonies. By the last third of the 1600s, the English wrote enslavement into law.

By that time, the English were emerging as the primary shippers of enslaved people. The Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, and French had all been involved in the trade. But English victories at sea in various wars gave England control of the sea-lanes. Thus, the English had control of the trade of enslaved Africans. Of course, this included English-Americans who engaged in the trade either as merchants or shippers.

Once begun, the trade by the English and colonial merchants continued for a long time. One example in South Carolina was Henry Laurens, a Charleston merchant of the 1760s. Like other merchants, he shipped products from South Carolina to England and the West Indies. On return trips many of his ships carried enslaved Africans. Strange as it may seem, his son, John Laurens, argued that African-Americans who fought for the Americans against Britain should be given freedom. Sadly, most other white South Carolinians did not agree.

During the 1600s and probably well into the 1700s, many whites felt that enslavement actually saved African lives. After all, whites told themselves, these were people who were captives in wars on the African continent. Had they not been taken, they would surely have been killed. Because local rulers controlled much of the trade in Africa itself, whites assumed that those taken were in fact prisoners of war. Later whites realized this was not the case. Greedy rulers sent out raiding parties to capture people who would be enslaved. The whole purpose of the raid was "human-stealing." Offers to buy people created those raids, not wars. Clearly this had no humane justification, but by then the trade was so profitable that it was difficult to stop.

Even after the United States banned the trade of enslaved people by law in 1809, it continued across the Atlantic illegally right up to the Civil War. The last known "slave ship" was a former racing yacht named *The Wanderer*. A Charleston resident was the owner. He pretended it was to be used in racing. Instead, he fitted the ship with large water tanks, eating utensils, and provisions for many people. In 1858 the ship headed for Africa, though officially it was supposed to be going to the Caribbean. The ship was 114 feet long, a little more than 30 paces. It left Africa with 490 mostly young African men chained to a temporary deck built below the main deck. Each person had little room to move or even breath. Two and a half months after leaving Charleston, the ship landed off the coast of Georgia on Jekyll Island. Unsanitary conditions caused many of the people on board to die. Some African-Americans living on the island today can trace their ancestors back to those taken on this cruel passage.

That is not the end of the story. The federal authorities heard of the illegal actions. The owner gave up control of *The Wanderer* and fled to avoid prosecution. The ship was sold several times before the outbreak of the Civil War. Then, the Union Army seized *The Wanderer* and refitted the ship to fight for the Union side. The former racing yacht and slave ship captured Confederate blockade runners and destroyed targets on the southern coast. It sank in 1871 off the coast of Cuba carrying a cargo of fruit.

The worst part of the actual trade in terms of physical torment was undoubtedly the trip across the ocean. The experience of the enslaved passengers on *The Wanderer* was multiplied by millions. Estimates are that as many as ten million Africans were forcibly shipped across the Atlantic. About half a million went to the British colonies in North America. Of those, about forty percent came through Charleston. Somewhere in the range of 75,000 remained in South Carolina. If this is true, then nearly half the African-Americans in the nation have some connection to South Carolina.

Those who survived the journey sometimes told

or wrote their stories. Such was the case with an enslaved African named Omar Ibn Seid. He was of the Fula society in West Africa. His merchant uncle had trained him in Arabic and mathematics. His religious faith was Islamic. Captured and sold, he ended up in Charleston in the 1800s. He ran away from his owner but was recaptured. While in jail awaiting return, he wrote on the walls in Arabic. This so amazed some of the observers that they arranged for Omar's purchase from his previous owner. Though still enslaved, he was able to record his own "autobiography" in 1831. He told about his life in Africa, his capture, and his enslavement. His work provides a story of Islamic background, faith, and literary ability too long lost in the early history of those who lived in Carolina.

Traders brought most of the Africans to South Carolina because of their skill as rice workers. Most whites cared little about the literary skills of those they enslaved. By the 1700s, South Carolina made the rice plantation the center of economic life. What whites cared about was growing rice and building the state. This is what enslaved Africans did. But in doing so, they changed the state in ways most whites did not understand. Many South Carolinians, white and black, still do not understand what happened. That is the topic of the next chapter.